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ABSTRACT

This report presents the results of a National Institute of Justice national survey to determine the number of jail boot camps currently in existence or planned. It also relates some of the difficulties experienced in operating a shock incarceration program within the limited confines of a county or local jail, and provides information on the costs involved in running jail boot camp programs. Boot camp programs, also called "shock incarceration programs," are described as programs that place offenders in a quasi-military program similar to a military basic training program that instills discipline, routine, and unquestioning obedience to orders. Results are presented from 10 jurisdictions that reported operating boot camps. It is noted that all of the boot camps were administered by local Sheriff or County Department of Corrections agencies with local funding and the programs ranged in size from 12 to 350 inmates whose expected length of stay ranged from 2 to 4 months. Program goals are identified and selection criteria are described. Program services, aftercare supervision, and program results are discussed. Results of the Los Angeles County sheriff's Regimented Inmate Diversion program are included. Policy implications for operating a jail boot camp are considered. Tables and graphs are included that illustrate organizational attributes; jail boot camp goals; selection criteria and placement procedures; and services, aftercare, and completion rates for the 10 jail boot camp programs. (NB)

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National Institute of Justice
Research in Brief

Michael J. Russell, Acting Director

October 1993

The Growing Use of Jail Boot Camps: The Current State of the Art

by James Austin, Ph.D., Michael Jones, and Melissa Bolyard

Boot camp programs, frequently called "shock incarceration" programs, place offenders in a quasi-military program similar to a military basic training program—a "boot camp" that instills discipline, routine, and unquestioning obedience to orders. The past decade has witnessed considerable interest in the concept of boot camps as a potentially effective intermediate sanction for certain types of offenders. The rationale for boot camps is as follows:

1. A substantial number of youthful first-time offenders now incarcerated will respond to a short but intensive period of confinement followed by a longer period of intensive community supervision.

2. These youthful offenders will benefit from a military-type atmosphere that instills a sense of self-discipline and physical conditioning that was lacking in their lives.

3. These same youths need exposure to relevant educational, vocational training, drug treatment, and general counseling services to develop more positive and law-abiding values and become better prepared to secure legitimate future employment.

4. The costs involved will be less than a traditional criminal justice sanction that imprisons the offender for a substantially longer period of time.

To date most of the attention has been directed at boot camps operated by State prison systems. Typically, these programs target offenders who would be sentenced to prison for at least 1 year had the boot camp sanction not been available to either the courts or State prison system. To date, 28 State prison systems are operating 43 such programs with more States planning to start similar programs.[1]

More recently there has been increased interest in the use of boot camps for *jail* populations. The Nation's jail system comprises over 3,500 adult detention facilities processing more than 10 million bookings each year.[2] On any given day nearly 427,000 pretrial or sentenced inmates are housed in jails. In terms of volume, the Nation's jails touch more adult offenders than any other form of corrections.[3]

For a number of reasons, a jail-operated boot camp could be of strategic value to the criminal justice system. Although the average length of stay for defendants and offenders admitted to jail is relatively short (15–16 days) compared to State prisoners (16–18 months), jails increasingly house inmates who can spend many months in confinement. For example, in many jurisdictions inmates can be sentenced to a year or more.[4]

Intermediate punishments are intended to provide prosecutors, judges, and corrections officials with sentencing options that permit them to apply appropriate punishments to convicted offenders while not being constrained by the traditional choice between prison and parole. Rather than *substituting* for prison or probation, however, these sanctions—which include intensive supervision, house arrest with electronic monitoring, and shock incarceration—bridge the gap between those options and provide innovative ways to ensure swift and certain punishment.

Shock incarceration programs, also known as "boot camp" programs, enforce a rigid military discipline on inmates chosen for this punishment. Those accepted into the programs must adhere to strict guidelines for conduct, must obey all orders without question or hesitation, and must undertake rigorous physical training and work regimens. Among the goals mentioned in surveys of program officials, rehabilitation and the reduction of recidivism were rated highest, followed by reducing prison crowding and changing offender behavior patterns.

Until recently, most boot camp programs were conducted in State prisons (one program is conducted by the Federal Bureau of Prisons). But now county and local jails, which house prisoners for considerably shorter terms than do prisons, have begun questioning whether shock incarceration might work there too.

As this report states, on any given day some 427,000 pretrial or sentenced inmates are housed in the Nation's jails. And although the average length of stay is relatively short compared to State prisons, inmates can spend many months in confinement.

This report presents the results of an NIJ national survey to determine the number of jail boot camps currently in existence or planned. It also relates some of the difficulties experienced in operating a shock incarceration program within the limited confines of a county or local jail, and provides information on the costs involved in running jail boot camp programs.

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Jails frequently hold significant numbers of State-sentenced inmates who spend many months incarcerated there. For example, paroled prisoners who violate the terms of their parole are generally housed in local detention facilities until a decision on their status is made by the State, and these decisions may take several months. And with the growing number of jails holding State-sentenced inmates because of prison crowding, jails are holding more and more inmates who will spend well beyond a year in confinement. According to the most recent national data, nearly 40,000 State and local prisoners from other jails are now held in jail facilities holding at least 100 inmates, and this number is certain to rise.[5]

Finally, significant numbers of adults placed on probation subsequently violate probation and are readmitted to jail to await a court's decision on whether to continue probation or commit the violator to prison. Here again, the offender may spend substantial time in custody awaiting the court's decision.

Because the inmate population found in jails is so diversified, the goals and attributes of prison-operated boot camps may not apply or may be more difficult to achieve in a jail-operated boot camp (for example, 180-day programs geared toward reducing jail crowding). However, the nature of jail populations may prove advantageous to criminal justice officials. For example, a jail boot camp may be better suited to function as an intermediate sanction for probation or parole violators in lieu of revocation and commitment to State prison.

How many jail boot camps are there?

During the spring of 1992, the National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD), at the request of NIJ, conducted a national survey to identify the number and characteristics of jail boot camps.

In May 1992, NCCD mailed more than 2,200 letters to sheriffs, jail administrators, and State probation departments throughout the country, asking whether they operated a boot camp, had plans for a boot camp, or had interest in a boot camp. Of approximately 200 of these surveys that were returned (10 percent):

- Ten jurisdictions indicated they were operating a boot camp.
- Thirteen jurisdictions reported that they were planning to open a boot camp in 1992 or 1993.
- One hundred thirty respondents said there were no immediate plans to open a boot camp but the jurisdiction was interested in establishing one in the near future.

One of the surveyed boot camps has since terminated its operations due to unanticipated budget constraints—the Los Angeles Sheriff's Regimented Inmate Diversion program. This program is discussed later.

What do jail boot camp programs look like?

A followup telephone interview was conducted with each of the 10 identified programs to obtain detailed information about the boot camp's operations. Four boot camp programs were then visited by NCCD researchers.

Organizational characteristics

All of the surveyed boot camps are administered by local Sheriff or County Department of Corrections agencies with local funding (see exhibit 1). Most of these programs are relatively new, having begun operations in the past 2 years. The earliest programs were begun in New Orleans, Louisiana, (1986) and Travis County, Texas (1988).

Even though the programs tend to be located within large jail systems (approximately 2,000 or more inmates), the size of these programs is quite modest (ranging from 12 to 350 inmates). The expected length of stay in these programs, which ranges from 2 to 4 months, is considerably shorter than that in prison boot camps. This design feature is consistent with the relatively short average length of stay for jail populations.

To date, almost all of the programs are operating at less than their design capacity. Some reasons for this include the selection criteria set by the programs, lack of coordination among criminal justice agencies, and the fact that few jail inmates will be in custody beyond the time they would have to spend in the boot camp program.

Considerable variation exists among the sites in their staffing and funding levels. Some programs like those in Travis County, Texas; New York City; and Harris County, Texas, have very large program staffs in addition to large custody staffs. Consequently, their staff-to-inmate ratios are quite low (exhibit 1). Documenting the actual costs of these programs is quite difficult since many of them are included in the overall jail budgets. Where cost data exist, annual budgets range from $400,000 for the 60-bed program in Oakland, Michigan, to $3.5 million for the 384-bed program in Harris County, Texas.

Program goals

Like prison boot camps, jail boot camps list a wide array of goals, ranging from rehabilitation to punishment (see exhibit 2). Not all programs report that reducing jail crowding is an important goal—perhaps in recognition that achieving such a goal would be extremely difficult given the relatively short period of stay in jail for most inmates. There is greater consensus that boot camps can reduce recidivism by rehabilitating offenders through the provision of a wide range of employment, educational, vocational, and drug treatment programs. These goals are directly linked to the perception that there exists a substantial pool of offenders admitted to jail who are not yet firmly committed to a criminal lifestyle and can either be deterred or rehabilitated through exposure to the boot camp program.

Some of the jails cited less dramatic but equally significant and more pragmatic program goals. In some cases, the jail hoped that the boot camp program would provide a safer environment for staff and inmates alike. The programs also were designed to enhance the jail's image in the local community.

Selection criteria

The criteria for selecting boot camp participants are quite varied across the 10 jurisdictions (exhibit 3). Like prison boot camps, most programs tend to identify youthful offenders although many have age limits exceeding 25 years. In particular, New York and New Orleans have maximum age limits of 39 years and 45 years respectively.

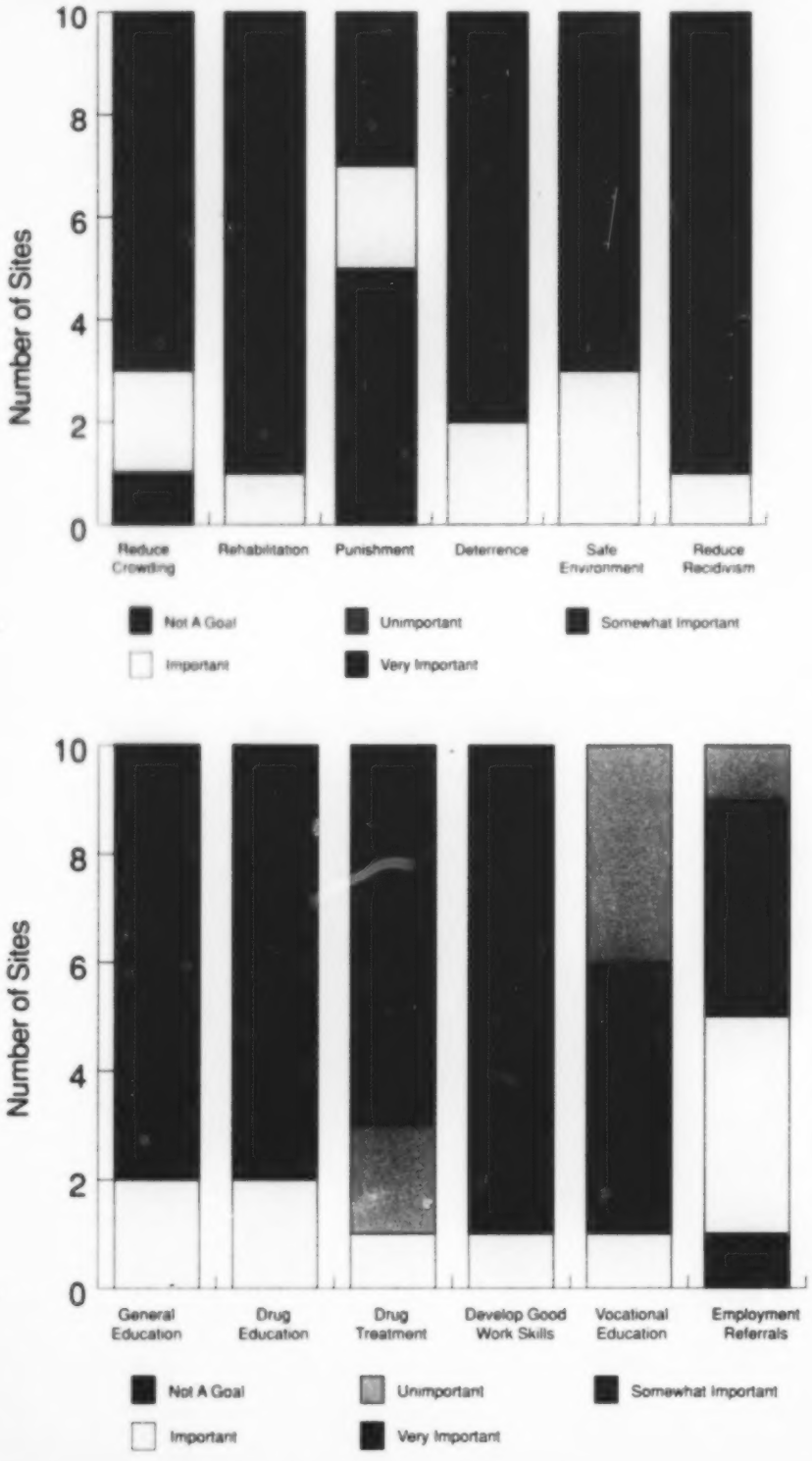
Although most programs prefer to select first-time offenders convicted of nonviolent or drug-related crimes, no consistent

Exhibit 1. Jail Boot Camps: Organizational Attributes

Attributes	Travis, TX	New York City—Men	New York City—Women	Santa Clara, CA	Nassau, NY	Orleans, LA	Harris, TX	Ontario, NY	Brazos, TX	Oakland, MI
Startup date	9/88	10/90	10/91	4/91	4/92	8/86	5/91	3/92	2/92	7/90
Bed capacity	76	300	100	44	38	126	384	18	12	60
ADP—County jail system	2,222	21,449	21,449	4,026	1,940	4,600	14,512	120	352	1,550
ADP—Boot camp	57	210	84	26	14	80	348	15	12	47
Percent of capacity	75%	70%	84%	59%	37%	63%	91%	83%	100%	78%
Annual admissions	266	1,059	210	124	N/A	177	814	108	36	119
Program length in days	90–120	60	70	63–70	90 days	250–300	90–120[a]	5	120	56
Average length of stay	120	60	70	65	N/A	275	120	5	120	56
Number of staff	20	119	24.5	8.5	21	24	119	19	7	10
Administrative	5	3	4	.5	5	1	4	3	0	1
Custody	3	101	17	8	14	23	65	6	4	8
Program	12	15	3.5	0	2	0	50	10[b]	3	1
Total annual budget	$1.1 Million	$367,119[c]	$858,174	$507,000	$600,000	$879,175	$3.5 Million	No Separate Budget	N/A	$403,423
Staff-to-inmate ratio	1:3	1:2	1:4	1:3	1.5:1	1:4	1:3	1:2[b]	1:2	1:5
Cost per inmate/day	$53	$5[c]	$28	$53	$117	$30	$28	N/A	N/A	$24
Funding source(s)	county	city	city	county	Federal, State, and county	County	State and county	N/A	County and Inmate Commissary	County

a Length of stay is extended beyond 120 days for inmates with disciplinary problems.
b Part-time volunteer personnel; not included in staff to inmate ratio.
c Staff salary only, does not include maintenance costs.

Exhibit 2. Jail Boot Camp Goals



policy exists to include such offenders automatically across all sites. A number of programs accept State parolees who have not been arrested for a new offense but have violated the terms of their parole supervision.

Four programs have the capacity to accept women, and two programs are exclusively set up for women (Santa Clara, California, and New York City). Of these two programs, one lacks a military training component. In general, those programs with a co-ed capacity have very low numbers of women participating, and some sites indicated that they may discontinue that aspect of the program in the future.

There are two basic processes by which an offender is selected and admitted to a program. In four sites, the sentencing court has considerable power in determining who is admitted to the boot camp program. In these sites the court recommends that certain offenders be considered by the program staff. After staff screening to verify that the offender meets the admission criteria, a recommendation is then made to the court to sentence the offender to the program. In one jurisdiction (Harris County, Texas), the judge can directly sentence the inmate with or without the consent of program staff.

In five jurisdictions, the jail has unilateral authority to admit an offender to the program independent of the court's recommendation. In this situation, the jail conducts its own screening of potential candidates who are either in the jail or are brought to the attention of program staff by prosecutors or defense attorneys.

The selection process can have important consequences for keeping the program filled with the appropriate clientele. In those jurisdictions that rely upon the court, intake may be less than anticipated if disagreements develop between a prosecutor and the defendant's attorney on whether an application to the boot camp is an acceptable alternative sentence. Several jurisdictions indicate that disagreements among prosecutors and defense attorneys have reduced the projected program intake.

In situations where the judge sentences the inmate to the boot camp, the offender is returned to the court upon completion of the program, successful or not. For those who fail the program, the court has the

option to resentence the inmate to a longer period of incarceration either in prison or within the jail. Those who successfully complete the program are either discharged or begin a period of probation supervision. Some programs allow for inmates to leave the program voluntarily; others do not. Only one program (Harris County) did not require the offender to volunteer for the program.

Program services

Here again, jail boot camps look very similar to prison boot camps in terms of the types of services offered (exhibit 4). The curriculum is generally separated into three phases of activity involving varying levels of military drill, physical training, structured work assignments, adult education, vocational education, drug education, and various counseling and life skills programs.

Most programs allow a gradual shifting from the physical training and work assignments to education, counseling, and community service activities as the offender progresses through the program. Military drill, physical training, and work assignments are emphasized during the initial month. The number of privileges increases as the inmates progress through the various stages of the program. For example, in several programs, neither TV nor visits are allowed for the first 30 days. Thereafter, privileges are increased to reward the participant's performance.

Aftercare supervision

Most of the programs include an aftercare component, which most observers consider essential for a successful boot camp program. Typically, the offender receives a sentence in which successful completion of the boot camp program leads to additional time under probation or parole supervision. In these situations, supervision is provided by the county or State probation agency. In a few programs, a probation officer is actually assigned to the boot camp program to help prepare inmates for release into the community. Several programs also allow graduates to return to the program on a volunteer basis to attend group counseling or support groups.

Program results

Very little research or documentation is available that would allow an assessment of how successful these programs have been in realizing their goals. With the exception of the now discontinued Los Angeles boot camp program, none has undergone any formal, independent study or cost-effectiveness evaluation.

Results of the Los Angeles County sheriff's RID program

In 1990 NIJ commissioned NCCD to evaluate the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Regimented Inmate Diversion program. Operating within the Nation's largest jail system (20,000 average daily population and over 250,000 admissions per year), the RID program was intended as a judicial sentencing option for selected volunteering defendants who were likely to receive lengthy jail sentences.

Funded primarily by cash and the sale of assets seized from convicted drug dealers, and with an annual operating budget of approximately $4 million, the RID program had as major goals the reduction of jail crowding, reduction of costs through avoiding long-term incarceration, and reduction of recidivism. An important secondary goal was to improve inmate control by establishing and enforcing strict rules of conduct.

The program exposed young adult male offenders to a residential, military-style boot camp for 90 days, followed by a 90-day period of intensive aftercare supervision in the community. Unlike many boot camp programs, RID included mandatory participation in formal education classes, drug treatment, and counseling sessions. Participants were primarily young minority males, poorly educated, with fairly substantial prior criminal and drug involvements.

Lessons learned. Evaluators found that RID participants actually spent more time in jail than did control-group inmates, when time spent in pretrial confinement was added to their boot camp stay. Thus, the costs of keeping them in jail exceeded the costs of keeping non-RID inmates.

Budgetary problems plagued Los Angeles County, however, and 18 months after the first platoon entered the RID program, county officials withdrew funding and the program was terminated.

Policy implications for operating a jail boot camp

Although jail boot camps are in their infancy, a number of important lessons already have been learned in terms of how such a program should be structured in the future. A number of suggestions are outlined for local jurisdictions interested in starting their own boot camp program.

Establishing realistic goals

To be of practical value to a local jail system, a jail boot camp must address several key issues. Based on this survey, the most frequently cited goals were:

- **Relief of crowding.** Since most jails are crowded, a boot camp program may have a positive influence on this situation. However, given the relatively short length of stay for most jail inmates, this objective will not be met unless the program carefully targets inmates who will spend at least 90 days or more in custody. Inmates who may be good candidates include probation violators and parole violators who are likely to be sentenced to prison or spend a considerable amount of time in jail prior to either transfer to a prison or release to probation or parole supervision. Diverting these offenders to a boot camp would help relieve prison intake. But in such a situation, the State prison system might have to subsidize the jail boot camp operations in order for the jail to benefit financially from the boot camp's operations.

- **Rehabilitation.** Reversing the cumulative negative experiences of youthful offenders within a 90-day period is, at best, an extremely difficult objective. A boot camp program can help initiate the process by improving an offender's ability to read, developing work skills, making job referrals, and dealing with long-term drug abuse histories. Research findings from the Los Angeles RID program show that a boot camp can significantly improve offenders' basic reading and math skills as well as help them locate full- and part-time jobs. But these gains do not necessarily translate into reductions in crime rates. Program administrators should avoid raising expectations about the program's ability to reduce recidivism rates dramatically.

- **Improving jail operations and community relations.** Perhaps the most direct impact a jail boot camp can have is to im-

Exhibit 3. Jail Boot Camps: Selection Criteria and Placement Procedures

Selection criteria	Travis, TX	New York City—Men	New York City—Women	Santa Clara, CA	Nassau, NY	Orleans, LA	Harris, TX	Ontario, NY	Brazos, TX	Oakland, MI
Age	17–26	16–39	19 plus	18 plus	16–18	17–45	17–25	16–30	17–30	17 plus
Sex	Co-ed	Males	Females	Females	Males	Co-ed	Co-ed	Co-ed	Males	Males
1st-time offenders	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Nonviolent offenders	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
Other	N/A	Low classification	Low classification	Substance abuse	N/A	Multiple offender	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Voluntary entry	For some	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	For some	Yes
Voluntary exit	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
Placement procedure	Judge recommends with jail approval; judge then sentences; jail also selects parole violators.	Jail selects, no other approval necessary; technical parole violators admitted upon referral to boot camp.	Jail selects, no other approval necessary; technical parole violators admitted upon referral to boot camp.	Jail selects, no other approval necessary.	Jail selects, no other approval necessary.[a]	Judge recommends with jail approval; judge then sentences.	Judge sentences, jail has no veto power.	Jail selects, no other approval necessary.	Judge recommends, jail approves.	Judge sentences, jail has veto power.

[a] Applicants screened by a board composed of correction staff, rehabilitation counselors, education counselor, clergy, and probation staff.

Exhibit 4. Jail Boot Camps: Services, Aftercare and Completion Rates

Services provided	Travis, TX	New York City—Men	New York City—Women	Santa Clara, CA	Nassau, NY	Orleans, LA	Harris, TX	Ontario, NY	Brazos, TX	Oakland, MI
Phys. training & drill	3 hrs/wk	1 hr/day	1 hr/day	3.75 hrs/day	2 hrs/day	2 hrs/day	6 hrs/day	2 hrs/day	1 hr/day	4 hrs/day
Work	6 hrs/wk	3 hrs/day	0	1.5 hrs/day	4 hrs/day	5 hrs/day	2 hrs/day	1/2 hrs/day	6 hrs/day	8 hrs/day
Vocational ed.	8 hrs/wk	3 hrs/day	2 hrs/day	2.5 hrs/day	0	3 hrs/day	2 hrs/day	2 hrs/day	Yes[a]	4 hrs/wk
Drug ed./couns.	4 hrs/wk	5 hrs/wk	2 hrs/day	1.5 hrs/day	4 hrs/day	1 hr/day	1 hr/day	4 hrs/day	1 hr/day	8 hrs/wk
Gen. education	5 hrs/wk	12 hrs/wk	2 hrs/day	1.5 hrs/day	4 hrs/day	4 hrs/day	4 hrs/day	0	1 hr/day	6 hrs/wk
Gen. counseling	Yes[a]	N/A	Yes[a]	1 hr/day	N/A	N/A	Yes[a]	2 hrs/wk	1 hr/day	2 hrs/wk
Other	Life skills 4 hrs/wk	Community services	Community services, 5 hrs/wk	Personal hygiene, 1 hr/day	N/A	Community services, 1 hr/day	Life skills, 2 hrs/day	Health education, 2 hrs/wk	N/A	N/A
Special aftercare supervision	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Type of supervision	Depends on risk level	Limited aftercare supervision for parole violators and conditional releases	Limited aftercare supervision for parole violators and conditional releases	N/A	N/A	Moderate	Intensive: Monitor Devices, Halfway Housing	N/A	Intensive	Moderate
Supervision Provided by	Probation	Parole and probation	Parole and probation	N/A	N/A	Jail and probation	Probation	N/A	Jail and probation	Jail and probation
Program completion rate	47.7%	69.9%	71.4%	79.0%	67.8%[b]	78.5%[c]	97.0%	92.6%	N/A	79.8%
Noncompletions	139	319	56	26	19	38	15	8	0	24
Medical/psychol.	21	13	6	3	5	N/A	0	0	0	4
Disciplinary	114	126	23	16	7	N/A	0	8	0	9
Voluntary withdrawl.	0	169	22	0	7	0	0	0	0	11
Other	4	11[d]	5[d]	7[e]	0	38[f]	15[g]	0	0	0

[a] Hours not available.
[b] Reflects those still successfully enrolled in program; none have completed program to date.
[c] Reflects those still successfully enrolled in program; no 1992 completions to date.
[d] Legal.
[e] Sentence served prior to program completion.
[f] Includes medical and disciplinary; breakdown not available.
[g] Probation absconders.

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prove the overall operation of a jail and its standing with the community. Jail operations are improved by creating an efficient inmate work force and a safe housing environment. Staff training is enhanced as officers learn to deal with inmates in a very direct but supportive manner. And community relations can be dramatically improved through community works projects.

Pretest selection criteria

Who should be admitted and can benefit from a boot camp needs to be determined by each site. Before embarking on a new program, officials must first know what types of offenders are admitted to jail and how long they stay. Once formal criteria are set, the program must pretest its selection criteria and its screening process. This will verify that there will be enough offenders to fill the program and that the boot camp will improve and not worsen the jail's crowding situation.

Limit length of stay

Unless there is compelling evidence that boot camp participants would spend, on average, 180 days or more in custody had they not been admitted to the boot camp, jail boot camps should limit the period of program participation to not more than 120 days.

Establish a strong aftercare component

For the positive effects of the program's rehabilitative services to be maintained, intense supervision and services should continue after release from the program. In some situations this will require establishing a transition halfway house, residential drug treatment, and/or intensive supervision probation for 3 to 6 months.

Evaluate program operations and effectiveness

Jurisdictions need to be encouraged to conduct, at a minimum, process evaluations that would assess whether the program is accepting the type of offenders it wants, delivering the types of services it should, maintaining an acceptable program completion rate, and effectively working within the allotted budget. Once these issues have been addressed, more rigorous impact evaluations should attempt to determine the program's effectiveness.

Notes

1. Based on personal communication with Doris L. MacKenzie, Department of Criminal Justice and Criminology, University of Maryland. See also Doris L. MacKenzie, "Boot Camp Prisons in 1993." *National Institute of Justice Journal* no. 227 (1993), Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Justice.

2. Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Jail Inmates 1991*, Washington, D.C., June 1992.

3. Assuming that nearly three-fourths of the total jail admissions represent individual adults who are booked only once a year, approximately 3 percent of the entire adult population is admitted to jail each year. By contrast, less than half a million adults are admitted to prison each year.

4. In Pennsylvania, offenders can be sentenced to from 2 to 5 years. In most jurisdictions, inmates can receive consecutive sentences of less than 1 year per sentence, which can produce a total sentence of several years without the benefit of good time.

5. The Texas Criminal Justice Policy Council estimates that more than 18,000 State-sentenced inmates are backed up in the county jails and that that number will increase to more than 40,000 by 1997.

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Findings and conclusions of the research reported here are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

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